Excerpt 1: From “Enrique’s Journey,” by Sonia Nazario

The boy does not understand.

His mother is not talking to him. She will not even look at him. Enrique has no hint of what she is going to do. Lourdes knows. She understands, as only a mother can, the terror she is about to inflict, the ache Enrique will feel, and finally the emptiness.

What will become of him? Already he will not let anyone else feed or bathe him. He loves her deeply, as only a son can. With Lourdes, he is openly affectionate. “Dame pico, mami. Give me a kiss, Mom,” he pleads, over and over, pursing his lips.

With Lourdes, he is a chatterbox. “Mira, mami. Look, Mom,” he says softly, asking her questions about everything he sees. Without her, he is so shy it is crushing.

Slowly, she walks out onto the porch. Enrique clings to her pant leg. Beside her, he is tiny. Lourdes loves him so much she cannot bring herself to say a word. She cannot carry his picture. It would melt her resolve. She cannot hug him. He is five years old.

They live on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, in Honduras. She can barely afford food for him and his sister, Belky, who is seven. She’s never been able to buy them a toy or a birthday cake. Lourdes, twenty-four, scrubs other people’s laundry in a muddy river. She goes door to door, selling tortillas, used clothes, and plantains.

She fills a wooden box with gum and crackers and cigarettes, and she finds a spot where she can squat on a dusty sidewalk next to the downtown Pizza Hut and sell the items to passersby. The sidewalk is Enrique’s playground.

They have a bleak future. He and Belky are not likely to finish grade school. Lourdes cannot afford uniforms or pencils. Her husband is gone. A good job is out of the question. Lourdes knows of only one place that offers hope.

As a seven-year-old child, delivering tortillas her mother made to wealthy homes, she glimpsed this place on other people’s television screens. The flickering images were a far cry from Lourdes’s childhood home: a two-room shack made of wooden slats, its flimsy tin roof weighted down with rocks, the only bathroom a clump of bushes outside. On television, she saw New York City’s spectacular skyline, Las Vegas’s shimmering lights, Disneyland’s magic castle.
Lourdes has decided: She will leave. She will go to the United States and make money and send it home. She will be gone for one year—less, with luck—or she will bring her children to be with her. It is for them she is leaving, she tells herself, but still she feels guilty.

She kneels and kisses Belky and hugs her tightly. Then she turns to her own sister. If she watches over Belky, she will get a set of gold fingernails from el Norte. But Lourdes cannot face Enrique. He will remember only one thing that she says to him: “Don’t forget to go to church this afternoon.”

It is January 29, 1989. His mother steps off the porch. She walks away.

“¿Dónde está mi mami?” Enrique cries, over and over. “Where is my mom?”

His mother never returns, and that decides Enrique’s fate.

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**Excerpt 2: from “In Trek North, First Lure Is Mexico’s Other Line,” by Randal C. Archibold, with accompanying photographs by Rodrigo Cruz.**

CIUDAD HIDALGO, Mexico — With her leg snapped and folded excruciatingly over her shoulder, Elvira López Hernández lay flat on a railroad bed as the freight train hurtled above her, clinging tightly to two things: the railroad ties beneath her and the memory of the 4-year-old daughter she had left behind in Guatemala.

“I said: ‘My God, I don’t want to die! My daughter!’ ”

She slipped off the train in January, one of scores of migrant stowaways heading to the United States. Now she sat at a shelter here, an amputee. But she had no intention of returning to the crime and desperation of Guatemala City; she was still looking north.

“What can I do?” she said.

In Washington, the biggest immigration overhaul in decades would tighten border security between Mexico and the United States to stem the flow of illegal crossings.

But there is another border making the task all the more challenging: Mexico’s porous boundary with Central America, where an increasing number of migrants heading to the United States cross freely into Mexico under the gaze of the Mexican authorities. So many Central Americans are fleeing the violence, crime and economic stagnation of their homes that American officials have encountered a tremendous spike in migrants making their way through Mexico to the United States.

American arrests of illegal crossers from countries other than Mexico — mostly from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador — more than doubled along the southwest border of the United States last year, to 94,532 from 46,997 in 2011.